DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 203 742 HE 013 992

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TITLE Knowledge Traditions in Higher Education. R and D for Higher Education.
INSTITUTION National Swedish Board of Universities and Colleges, Stockholm. Research and Development Unit.
PUB DATE 80
NOTE 10p.: Light print may not reproduce clearly.
AVAILABLE FROM National Swedish Board of Universities and Colleges, R and D Unit, P.O. Box 45501, S-104 30 Stockholm, Sweden.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Academic Education: *College Role: Educational Change: *Educational History: *Educational Philosophy: Foreign Countries: *Higher Education: *Intellectual Disciplines: Professional Education: Research Needs: Scientific Research: Technical Education: *Vocational Education
IDENTIFIERS *Sweden

ABSTRACT

Issues pertaining to knowledge traditions that are important to the reform of higher education in Sweden are considered. While nonacademic parts of higher education (e.g., vocational/technical, nursing) account for more than half of its admissions, it is suggested that thinking regarding higher education in recent years has used the ideals of the research university. Various ways of viewing the planning and activities of higher education are examined, including the propositions that knowledge is a collection of concepts and skills (Liedman, 1978) and that knowledge is embedded in a class-determined world picture (Williams, 1965). The present higher education system has developed from a diversity of institutions that reveal the abundance of knowledge traditions in society, including schools of agriculture, teacher training colleges, and schools of medicine. Each of the various types of institution has its own ideology, its own approach to knowledge, and its own system of values. The tasks of higher education are usually delineated as teaching and research. While research links have become a watchword of the reform of higher education, there are questions about what this implies: (1) whether all basic higher education must be linked with scientific research, or (2) whether every part of higher education has some responsibility for the development of its knowledge traditions. (SW)

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UHÄ THE NATIONAL SWEDISH BOARD OF UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES

ISSN 0347-4976

R & D for Higher Education

INFORMATION ON RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

ED203742

HE013992

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KNOWLEDGE TRADITIONS IN HIGHER EDUCATION x)

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THE 1975 REFORM OF HIGHER EDUCATION

The reform of higher education resolved on by the Riksdag (the Swedish Parliament) in 1975 and implemented from 1st July 1977 was preceded by long preparations. During the 1960s - as before and after that decade, though with different emphases - quantitative problems relating to the labour market had carried a lot of weight in the planning of higher education. Even when the decision to reform higher education is regarded as part of the democratization of Swedish education, the main focus of attention has been on such outward planning questions as numbers of students and localization. Insofar as qualitative issues has been considered, the approach to them has often been onedimensional, the implication being that there was one type of knowledge which was best, and that this knowledge should be transmitted to everybody or to as many people as possible. The technological approach to education fitted in nicely with this basic view. It was assumed that exact educational objectives could be stated - they expressed the best knowledge already referred to - and that the achievement of those objectives would then be a limited executive task of a technical and administrative nature.

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x) This essay outlines some of the premises of the co-ordinated research projects described in three preceding issues of "R & D for Higher Education" (Nos. 1980:11, 1980:12 and 1980:13). As a member of the advisory group for the Swedish Research into Higher Education programme, Mr Bergendal is actively involved in discussions concerning these projects.

The most comprehensive integral planning work regarding the higher education system was carried out by the 1968 Education Commission (U 68) in association with the Commission for Admission to Further Education appointed in 1965. The U 68 report (*SOU 1973:2*) bears the seeds of an approach that was to break with the then prevailing views. In discussing recurrent education as a strategy for Swedish educational planning, the Commission began by considering problems of quantitative balance, but the interaction of working life experience and higher education soon came to occupy the focal point of attention, and the knowledge located in the community at large acquired a value more on a level with that of the knowledge existing within the higher education system.

Also, in the first chapter of the report, which amounts to a preamble to U 68's proposals, there are sections dealing with links with working life and links with research. It is emphasized that higher education must be organized in such a way that its various parts will preserve and develop their distinctive characteristics. But what implications did this hold for artistic studies, for the training of nurses and physiotherapists, for the training of pre-school teachers and teachers of industrial trades and crafts, for higher vocational education? These questions were left for the future to elucidate and deal with. Although the non-academic parts of the higher education system account for more than half its volume in terms of the admissions capacity of the various programmes, thinking regarding higher education in recent years has employed the ideals and yardsticks of the research-based universities. In this way the Higher Education Act and the Higher Education Ordinance have become the eye of a needle through which both internal and external forces are trying to push the development of the new higher education system. How do the non-academic traditions of higher education stand up to this interplay of forces? Are they capable of preserving and developing their distinctive characteristics?

KNOWLEDGE TRADITIONS

Higher education policy, like policy for the school, is based on explicit and implicit assumptions about knowledge. The very fact of different meanings being read into the word knowledge suggests that there are several ways of looking at the planning and the activities of higher education. Sven-Eric Liedman (14) has proposed that we should regard knowledge as a collection of conceptions and

skills. This approach can be applied to everyday, common knowledge and also to vocational knowledge and the type of knowledge administered and developed by the higher education system. Skills which are not geared to conceptions, like conceptions which are not geared to skills, are not particularly amenable to development. The transformation of knowledge is to a great extent determined by the use made of it, which can be technical and administrative or can be aimed at developing human conceptions (13).

An approach of this kind links knowledge to people, groups, social classes, organizations and institutions as the vehicles of knowledge. The craft guilds of earlier times and the professions of contemporary society can be taken as examples. But groupings are not always institutionalized. History shows how economically, politically, socially and religiously determined groups have enshrined conceptions and skills which have shaped human destinies. Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie's descriptions (8, 9, 10) of French rural communities and small towns during the period between the Albigensians and the Camisards contribute towards a realization of this kind. E R Dodds (3), in a sweep covering more than a thousand years, describes how rational knowledge is embedded in irrational conceptions within the Greek culture. Studies of division of labour and power relationship in modern industry, medicine, social welfare and schools etc (e g 6, 7) reveal structures of a related kind in our own society.

Raymond Williams (17) has described the long revolution from the collectivist view of knowledge in the Middle Ages to an individualist view in our own age. Lucien Goldmann, on the other hand, argues in a number of essays (5) that our explicit and visible knowledge is embedded in a class-determined world picture (*vision du monde*) which determines our views concerning the type of knowledge which is valid. A world picture of this kind permeates our lives and actions to such a degree and is so abundant that a single person can only bring out, express and adopt a standpoint concerning a small portion of it. It is passed on from one generation to another. Paul Feyerabend (4) maintains that knowledge lives in traditions. In the free society, he argues, liberty applies to traditions and not to individuals. Different traditions must be given the same rights and the same access to educational centres and other power centres. The nature of good knowledge is defined by the citizens in the democratic decision-making process. Tore Nordenstam and Håkan Törnebohm (15) present an argument which is also important to our own society, concerning the relations between scientific traditions from western civilization and the traditions of an African community.

In a study forming part of a NBUC project, Edmund Dahlström (2) observes that the system of higher education and research, as he terms it, contributes towards and

reinforces a vertical division of labour. Planning and decision making tend to be concentrated within a small group of well-educated people, while the majority are reduced to implementing what has been created and decided by others. Planning systems based on principles of programme budgeting and on professional R & D are often expressive of such tendencies. In (5) Lucien Goldmann analyses the implications for the whole of our culture of the growing influence of technocracy.

COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES AS KNOWLEDGE INSTITUTIONS

Schools and higher education institutions have a special role in relation to knowledge - that of transmitting, developing and authorizing - although (an important point) they do not have a monopoly of most of their tasks. The very diversity of the former institutions from which the present higher education system has sprung points to a width and abundance of knowledge traditions in our society: schools of nursing, physiotherapy institutes, pre-school teacher training colleges, institutes of social studies, elementary school teacher training colleges, junior school teacher training colleges, vocational teacher training institutes, merchant marine officers' schools, the Royal Academy Art School, the Graphic Institute, the theatre schools, the School of Music Drama, the colleges of dentistry, the schools of medicine, the Agricultural College of Sweden, the College of Veterinary Medicine, the College of Forestry, the colleges of technology, the universities and other institutions besides. And yet there are important knowledge traditions which are not rooted in State institutions.

Each of these institutions had its own ideology, its own approach to knowledge and its own system of values. Even between junior school teacher training colleges and elementary school teacher training colleges there were differences of opinion concerning the nature of good and less good knowledge. These institutions had their own histories, their own specific structures of appointments and management, their own relations with working life and representative organizations, their own patterns of student and teacher recruitment, their own links with Government departments and national administrative authorities and also with local and national politicians and other persons in positions of power and authority. They had their own outward faces and could if necessary take steps to mobilize opinion. Their knowledge traditions were sustained by an intricate network within their own walls and in the community at large.

The knowledge institutions have tasks in relation to individual people: preparing them for future vocational activity, contributing towards their personal development. They also have social tasks: training future labour for production, and developing new knowledge. This description of tasks as we are accustomed to view them could be made more detailed and articulate. Briefly, the tasks of the higher education system are usually summed up in the words teaching and research. There are risks attached to this mode of expression. It is very liable to suggest that the knowledge responsibility of the higher education system can be divided, and also that research is the only knowledge development which higher education has to assume responsibility for. It is then only a short step to the opinion that the knowledge authorized by the scientific community is the best one in all situations. There is cause to analyse clichés of this kind and their implications for our culture.

In an essay on legal studies at medieval universities (16), Stig Strömholm has inquired concerning the implications for medieval society - and for the society in which we live today - of *la pénétration juridique*. He does not expound this question in detail, but it deserves to be translated into the circumstances of our own age. Are higher education institutions to be completely autonomous centres for the development and evaluation of knowledge which is transmitted as a prefabricated product to permeate society? Or are they points of crystallization for the knowledge which is borne by a society's traditions and which is highlighted by economic, social, technical and ideological developments? Sven-Eric Liedman's major study *Motsatsernas spel (The Game of Contradictions)* (12) sheds light on questions of this kind.

Research links have become a watchword of the reform of higher education, but the interpretation of this watchword can give rise to contention. Does it simply mean that all basic higher education must be linked with scientific research - existing research or research which may come to be developed? Or does the term "research links", used as a slogan of knowledge policy, imply that every part of the higher education system has a share in responsibility for the development of its knowledge traditions, on the conditions which those traditions dictate? This is something new, because even if the pre-school teacher training colleges, the physiotherapy institutes, the schools of nursing and the colleges of music tried to move with the times, they did not have the resources to develop the knowledge they were working with. They were responsible for passing on knowledge. If the higher education institution assumes its new developmental responsibility in these and other fields solely or essentially by linking up with scientific research, what will be the implications? What would happen to the non-academic educational traditions,

which between them amount to more than half the total fabric of higher education, and what would be the social consequences? Is development along these lines compatible with the purpose of the reform of higher education, namely to preserve and develop the distinctive characteristics of the various knowledge traditions?

By looking at higher education as a collection of knowledge institutions responsible for a wide variety of traditions - artistic, practically based and scientific - one obtains a useful coign of vantage for considering several topical questions. Can one and the same higher education unit sustain essentially different traditions on equal conditions? The policy decision concerning the delimitation of higher education units in Stockholm appears to have been based on the assumption that this is not possible, while the organization of the other five universities presupposes that it is possible or else is aimed at subordinating all higher education traditions to the scientific traditions. Is coexistence with mutual respect and equal opportunities of development possible, or do certain traditions tend at best to tolerate, or else to take over, restrain or even destroy others? Questions of this kind are also vitally important when considering the future organization of higher education teaching appointments. It is sometimes argued in the debate on the localization of higher education institutions that establishments outside the university cities conduct activities of inferior quality. This discussion can only take place within a particular tradition. For among other things the large number of higher education institutions could be aimed at facilitating support for different traditions. The questions relating to higher education admissions also acquire new emphases when viewed in the light of educational traditions, and the same applies to the organization of studies in higher education.

THE STUDY OF EDUCATIONAL TRADITIONS

The questions outlined here are of vital relevance to the reform of higher education. This has made it natural for them to be included in the Swedish Research into Higher Education programme, and among other things they are being studied in three co-ordinated projects described in three preceding issues of *R & D for Higher Education*: Nos. 1980:11, 1980:12 and 1980:13. Clearly there is a certain risk entailed by these projects. They are being conducted by persons raised in the

scientific traditions of higher education, and yet one of their main issues concerns the relationship between scientifically and practically based traditions. But studies of a tradition by its representatives can also be valuable, and it is important to point out that the studies now in progress must be critically appraised not only in scientific terms but also in terms of the traditions dealt with.

Gunnar Bergendal

1980-06-03 *(the text has been checked and completed in March 1981)*

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